

	<b>INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY</b>	
	<b>Chapter 5:</b> General Case Management	<b>Effective Date:</b> February 1, 2020
	<b>Section 6:</b> Locating Absent Parents	<b>Version:</b> 6

<b>STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE</b>
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The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will make diligent efforts to identify and locate any absent parents of all children under DCS care and custody. A diligent search to locate each parent will begin at the earliest possible time and continue throughout the life of the case or until the termination of parental rights (TPR) has been granted by the court. See policy [2.26 Diligent Search](#) for additional information.

When the identity and/or whereabouts of a parent of a child under DCS care and custody is unknown, DCS will attempt to identify and locate the parent in order to provide notification regarding court proceedings using various means, such as the Putative Father Registry and Parent Locator services. DCS will complete an [Affidavit of Diligent Inquiry \(SF 54778\)](#) to document for the court all efforts made to identify and/or locate the absent parent. Continued diligent efforts to identify and/or locate absent parents will be included in each report to the court.

**Code Reference**

[IC 31-34-3-2: Procedures for notice; custodial parent, guardian, or custodian who cannot be located](#)

<b>PROCEDURE</b>
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When the identity and/or whereabouts of a parent of a child under DCS care and custody is unknown the FCM will:

1. Gather information regarding the identity of the parent of a child under DCS care from all available resources, beginning during the assessment and continuing throughout the life of the case. The information that may be gathered for each parent includes, but is not limited to the following:
  - a. Full name and any known aliases;
  - b. Social Security Number (SSN);
  - c. Date of birth;
  - d. Current and previous address and/or telephone number;
  - e. Current or past employer;
  - f. Name, address, and telephone number for any known relatives; and
  - g. Any benefits received (e.g., Social Security Disability [SSDI], and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families [TANF]).

**Note:** When the parent is located, gather information regarding his or her income and resources during the removal month. See policy [15.8 Financial Resources](#) for additional information.

2. Ask about a history of domestic violence (DV) in the relationship. Check police records, protective order registry, and other sources to obtain additional information about potential DV.

**Note:** If there is a history of DV, the search for the absent parent must still be completed. The information obtained will help the FCM be more prepared when the parent is located and while assessing permanency alternatives.

3. Ensure a request is made to the DCS staff attorney to complete a search of the Putative Father Registry;
4. Utilize the [Family Network Diagram](#) to create a Genogram and Ecomap, and present a copy to the court. A hard copy of the diagram should be kept in the case file and uploaded into the case management system;
5. Obtain and review a copy of the child's birth certificate to ascertain the date of birth and the names of parents listed;
6. Ask the child, if age-appropriate, about the absent parent or extended family;
7. Inquire as to who is listed as the emergency contact at school and with medical providers;
8. Review the child's health records for the names of the child's parents;
9. Make a referral to the [DCS Investigator](#) to assist in identifying or searching for the absent parent. For additional information see the [Permanency and Practice Support](#) website for more information;
10. Request service providers share any information obtained about the absent parent with DCS;
11. Ensure the following database and institutional searches are completed during the development of each case plan and throughout the life of the case, until the absent parent is located:
  - a. DCS case management system;
  - b. Indiana Support Enforcement Tracking System (ISETS);
  - c. White pages website at <http://www.whitepages.com/>;
  - d. Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV);
  - e. County jails;
  - f. Department of Corrections (DOC) at <http://www.in.gov/idoc/> and click on "Offender Locator"; and
  - g. Other state offender locator services as available;
12. Continue making diligent efforts to locate the absent parent until the absent parent is located by:
  - a. Attempting to contact the absent parent at his or her last known address until there is verification that the absent parent is no longer living at the address on record;
  - b. Attempting to contact the absent parent at any new address that may be identified;
  - c. Attempting to make contact with other individuals (e.g., extended family) who may assist in locating the absent parent;
  - d. Advise the Child and Family Team (CFT) regarding the efforts to identify and locate the absent parent; and
  - e. Provide a completed and/or updated [Affidavit of Diligent Inquiry \(SF 54778\)](#) to the DCS Staff Attorney.

**Note:** When the identity and location of the absent or alleged parent is known, the FCM will provide the address of the parent to the DCS Staff Attorney so the parent may receive notices of court proceedings and may be considered for placement and services.

13. Document all efforts and results in the case management system.

The FCM Supervisor will:

1. Ensure all resources have been used to identify and locate absent parents and offer guidance to the FCM during [clinical supervision](#) as needed;
2. Assist with any searches that may be necessary; and
3. Ensure all efforts to locate an absent parent are documented in the case management system.

The DCS Staff Attorney will:

1. Respond to any request from the FCM to complete a search of the Putative Father Registry;
2. Review the [Affidavit of Diligent Inquiry \(SF 54778\)](#) and ensure notice of proceedings is published as to the absent parent;
3. Provide notice to the court of any established identity and locations for the absent parent so notices of court proceedings may be provided; and
4. Request the judge place the custodial parent or other individuals under oath to answer questions regarding the absent parent and extended family at the first court hearing the parent attends and any subsequent hearings, if needed.

## PRACTICE GUIDANCE

### **DCS Investigators**

DCS Investigators are employees of DCS who are responsible for assisting FCMs in locating absent parents, relatives, and/or other identified persons of interest to the case and/or assessment. FCMs may make a referral for this assistance in situations where all procedural steps have been completed and their efforts have been unsuccessful. Additional information regarding how to make a referral, when to make a referral, and other helpful information may be found on the [Permanency and Practice Support-Investigator](#) website.

### **Clinical Supervision**

Clinical Supervision is a process in which an individual with specific knowledge, expertise, or skill provides support while overseeing and facilitating the learning of another individual.

**Example:** The focus of clinical supervision for an FCM is on practice that directly impacts outcomes for families.

## FORMS AND TOOLS

1. [Family Network Diagram](#)
2. [Family Network Diagram Guide](#)
3. [Affidavit of Diligent Inquiry \(SF 54778\)](#) – available in the case management system

## RELATED INFORMATION

### **Importance of Conducting a Diligent Search and Engaging Absent Parents**

Failure to complete a diligent search for the absent parent may delay appropriate permanency options for a child under the care and custody of DCS. It is necessary to demonstrate to the court that a diligent search has been made to locate and engage an absent parent before a court may involuntarily terminate that person's parental rights. Locating and engaging an absent

parent may lead to several positive outcomes. It may aid in establishing a relationship or connection between a child and parent or other relatives, which may lead to expedited permanency outcome. See policy [2.26 Diligent Search](#) for additional guidance.